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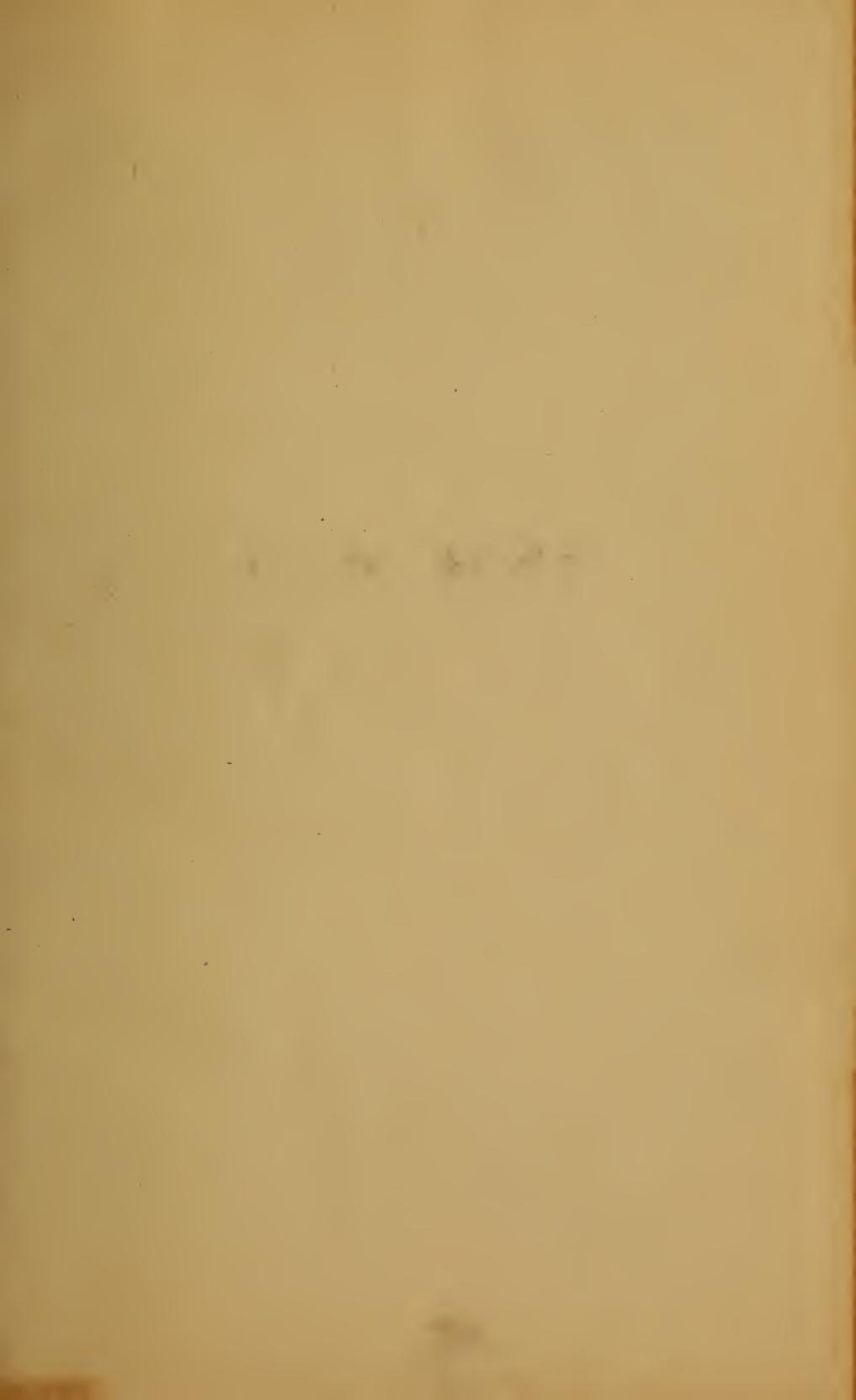


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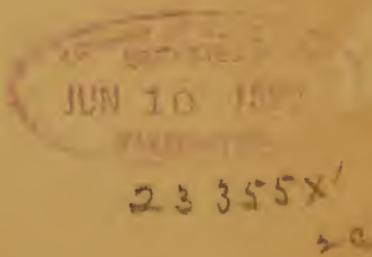
AMORY H. BRADFORD.

OLD WINE: NEW BOTTLES

*Some Elemental Doctrines in
Modern Form*

BY
AMORY H. BRADFORD, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "SPIRIT AND LIFE," ETC.



NEW YORK
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I.

THE LIVING GOD.

“THE being of God has not its foundations in the life of humanity: but humanity has its foundations in the life of God.”—MULFORD’s *Republic of God*.

“To Thee we rise, in Thee we rest,
We stay at home, we go in quest,
Still Thou art our abode.
The rapture swells, the wonder grows,
As full on us new life still flows
From our unchanging God.”

T. H. GILL.

“Eternal Light! Eternal Light!
How pure the soul must be,
When, placed within thy searching sight,
It shrinks not, but with calm delight
Can live and look on Thee !”

THOMAS BINNEY.

“Of the divine life itself there are no differing dispensations . . . Moreover, the divine attitude toward man was the same before the coming of our Lord as afterward. The dispensation which we call Christian, while it is the special, is not the only dispensation of grace. In its largest meaning the Christian dispensation is not limited to any time.—*God in His World*.

“And Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”—MATTHEW xvi. 16.

I.

THE LIVING GOD.

BUT why the *living* God? Because, in the minds of many, God is practically dead: He is a name, or a force, or a Being who once was near to the earth, but who has departed, and has no more interest or care for humanity; a Being who walked with the patriarchs, talked with the prophets, did marvelous works in apostolic times, but who has now retired into awful and unapproachable mystery, if not into inaction and death. There are two classes to whom God is practically dead—materialists, who believe in no spirit pervading the universe, who see nothing but matter and force working in accordance with unintelligent laws toward an end which must be death; and those who have a clear and strong faith in the God of the Hebrews, the God who manifested himself in Jesus Christ, who inspired the Apostles, and who continued in the world until the Bible was completed—and then disappeared forever. They do not say that he has

gone forever, but their theories concerning religion imply that so far as he is related to the universe, and especially to men, he might as well have no existence. Beside these cold and cheerless speculations—the first of which results from undue emphasis upon phenomena, and not enough upon spirit; and the second from a tendency in human nature to exalt the past, which is found not only in Christian nations but also among the heathen, and which is the same in reality as Ancestral Worship in China—I place the teaching of Holy Scripture, which thrills with inspiration, hope and power. Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and the emphasis is no more on the first clause than on the second.

The phrase, and the idea, “living God” is common, both in the Old Testament and New. The Patriarchs believed in a Being near and real; he communicated his will; he talked with them as they walked by the way; in the silence of the night, beneath the near and tender heavens, he uttered his commands; in dreams his messengers seemed to descend and ascend on ladders of light; he manifested himself in the beautiful order of nature, and spoke with audible voice unto those who had ears to hear. Moses communed with him on the Mount, and received from him laws for the people; Isaiah saw his glory as it filled the Temple; Elijah heard his voice, and was ministered to by his messengers

at the brook Cherith ; Daniel was delivered by his power from the fiery furnace and the den of lions. One phrase condenses the faith of the Hebrews—*They believed in the living God*. When we turn from the Old Testament to the New the same vivid consciousness continues. The Master lived in the realization of the Divine presence and power: he talked with his Father and held communion with him on the still mountains, in the quiet of Galilean midnights. The Apostles in the same faith continued his ministry. Wherever he went Paul carried the message—Ye are the children of the living God. He told the Corinthians that they were the temples of the living God ; he exhorted the Thessalonians to turn from their idols and serve the living God ; to Timothy he spoke of the Church of the living God, and to the Athenians declared that even idolatrous Greeks lived, moved, and had their being in him. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews said that it was a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ; and John, last and noblest of the Apostolic band, whose spirituality seemed to have acquired a finer sensibility, spoke of the time when all will come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God.

Throughout, the Bible palpitates with life. It is the Book of life ; its teachings are conveyed in terms of life. The God of the Hebrews was not an impersonal power, distant and difficult of approach, but near and constantly accessible.

When he manifested himself in his supreme revelation it was not in a book about which men could wrangle, but in a life which was its own best evidence. When the Master himself disappeared, he promised that the same living ministry should be continued, and that the Comforter should come, the Spirit of Truth who should abide forever. In the New Testament God is always represented as near, efficient and unchangeable, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever"; not "a marble Deity upon a marble throne," but a Father, a Friend, a Helper; not a cheerless power, but a free Spirit. In him, men live and move and have their being. He is near them, even in their hearts, and yet he fills all spaces, for if we take the wings of the morning and go to the uttermost parts of the sea, he is there, and if we make our bed in the depths of the under-world, he is there. Three thoughts are always prominent in the Scriptures:—God is living; God is a Spirit; God is everywhere.

Philosophy and theology have been steadily moving toward a fuller appreciation of these central and governing truths. At first God was regarded as transcendent; that is, a Being beyond the blue of the sky and the shining of the stars, or at least beyond the possibility of approach. Then men began to ask how such a Being could have any relations with humanity; and thus gradually, opinions have crystallized in the belief that God is not throned in splendor outside the walls

of the universe, sending his messages down to humanity, as a king sends messages to his far-away subjects, but that he is spiritually everywhere. Do not be troubled by that expression. We know not what spirit is, and yet are conscious that we are spirits. Each day we are humbled by the greatness of our own ideas. Imagination can traverse the universe in an instant; one moment we are here, and the next on the remotest of the fixed stars. Thought flies more swiftly than light; a hundred million miles in a second is no unusual speed. Imagination is unlimited. You may shut a man's body in a room, but his imagination and his memory will leap all barriers and the one will go to the ends of the earth and back along the track of years, while the other will soar through the spaces, limitless and free, as if there were no body. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was probably conceived by John Bunyan while he was in Bedford Jail, but bolts and bars of iron could not prevent him from climbing the Delectable Mountains and walking the streets of the Celestial City.

Just what is meant by the phrases, "God is a spirit," and "God is everywhere," we do not know. There is nothing contradictory in them, but the thought is too great for us to comprehend. We do not know what space is, or what eternity is, or even much about what the ocean is, although we talk of these things as if we knew. Modern theology is characterized by a

doctrine of the Divine Immanence is not new, but the old teaching of the Omnipresence made to mean something. And that so-called "New Theology," which so many fear will overturn faith in religion, really is an incalculable blessing because it is a return to this fundamental truth.

"In the beginning God created." In the "beginning :"—imagination is wearied in trying to exhaust that word. In the beginning, God : at the end, the City of the Living God. Thus we have in the Scriptures the living God at the beginning of all things and at the end of all things. Between these two poles the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Psalmist, the Apostles bore vital witness to the existence and the influence with men of the living God. There is no uncertain strain in all that music. Behind all things is the living God, controlling forces, inspiring processes, the author of life; manifest in an audible voice, in a flaming bush, in a vision of the night, in a great historic movement, at last in a human form—a unique personality : and from first to last permeating all things, living in the progress of humanity, reflecting his glory in the splendor of the skies, revealing his watchful care in the clothing he fashions for the birds, and the provision which he makes for man. We are not in the hands of blind Force, or of One so far away that he cannot understand, and does not care for us : but life and history are guided by return to faith in the omnipresence of God. The

the same intelligence which presided at the Creation, and the same love which bled upon the cross; and we, howsoever humble, may walk with God and receive inspirations from him in the same way and to the same extent as patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs.

The doctrine of the Living God implies that all things in the past have been in his hands, and no man and no nation have ever been separate from him. His providence was not limited to the Hebrews: it was conspicuous in their history and he chose them for a special work; but he has had other purposes and other lessons to teach mankind than those which came through Israel. He was as near to Babylon and Damascus as to Jerusalem and Bethlehem: the same hand that smoothed the slopes of Calvary and piled the snows on Lebanon made a passage through the mountains for the Colorado, and lifted toward the sun the glittering glory of Shasta. The living God could not be a little God. Since all things have been in the hands of the living God, love, justice and truth have been at the heart of things in all the past. Whether humanity started in a state of innocence but of imperfection, or whether there was in the past some golden age from which there has been a fall, is of little practical importance. Whatever the theory of the development of man, God has never been absent, and his care for the children whom he has made has never wearied.

“Whatever is, is right,”—a more untrue word was never spoken. Are vice and crime right? Is the Devil a saint? Many things not “right” are *best* for localities or conditions, but they must be gotten rid of as soon as they have served their purpose; they are only means by which the right and truth are hastened. The old sacrificial and ceremonial system was not right, and the prophets were hot against it, but it was best under the circumstances. Many abuses have existed, from which men argue that there can be no justice or love; but they forget that those abuses were only conditions through which, in a natural and living way, a higher and more perfect state has been realized. A bandaged arm is not right, but it is a condition by which a broken arm is to be made right. Why was the coming of the Master so long delayed? Why were men, fitted for a religion of light and love, so long permitted only the light of nature? We are pointed to the mysteries of Egypt and Greece, to the imperfect moral teachings of the sages and seers of other faiths, and asked, If there was a God how could he allow such things? The Master said to his Mother, “Mine hour is not yet come;” and his hour had not come a thousand years before the Advent, or five hundred years, or one year before it. But it cannot be argued that therefore God had no interest in humanity, and that the millions who peopled Asia, Africa and Europe, and who perhaps in earlier times roamed between the

Atlantic and Pacific, were absent from the watch and care of the Almighty. If he was living he was living everywhere. Either there was no God, or there was a Being unworthy of the name, or else we must believe what the Scripture says, that "he has not left himself without a witness among any people." For myself, I rejoice to believe that the same love which was manifested on Calvary has been manifested, according to the ability of men to receive it, in all the ages of the world's history, and among all sorts and conditions of men. There have been ruder times and greater darkness, but those who walked in darkness did not thereby cease to be God's children : and it is probable that in many lands those who have tried to do right even if they stood alone, have been taken from lions' dens like Daniel, and like Jacob have seen angels coming to them out of heaven. The living God has always and everywhere been the loving God, and his hand has never once been off the wheel of change.

All things *are* in the hands of the living God ; therefore the Christian doctrine of Providence is a necessary and beautiful reality. It is difficult to understand how one Being can see and know all who live ; how he can hear their prayers, and care for their necessities ; but difficulty of comprehension is no indication of unreality. We speak the word "God," but no one ever yet compassed its meaning. We talk about the Creator,

but who has a clear idea of what "Creator" signifies? We talk of the universe, but who knows much about the universe? Day by day science reaches farther into the spaces; some new star flashes its light; and who can tell how many yet are undiscovered? Before infinite space we must bow with humiliation and awe. No man has fathomed it, and the seen is to the unseen as a single leaf to all the autumn forests; as one grain of sand to all the sand of the seashore; as one ray of light to the splendor which fills immensity. We comprehend few of the things by which we are surrounded, and as little appreciate the reality of Divine Providence. The Master said that He who clothed the lilies and fed the sparrows would much more care for the children of men: and a Being who has personal interest in all the birds, and all the flowers, and all humanity, is beyond the utmost stretch of imagination. Yet, in the midst of the storm and stress, when it seems as if infinite darkness were enshrouding all things, how sweet and glad to realize—as realize we may—that we rest in love fathomless as the spaces and endless as the ages! Infinite intelligence and infinite love were not the exclusive property of some far past age, or of a narrow and conceited people; they belong to all peoples and all times. I cannot tell you how it is, but I am sure that no single child walks the streets whose name is not known in the heavens; not a burden presses upon you in business or in your homes that does not

also rest upon the heart of God; not one life is without purpose, and not one soul "walks with aimless feet." Providence is a reality.

But, also, Inspiration is a reality. Inspiration is the Divine Spirit speaking to the human, and wherever the heart is pure and the mind open, that Spirit comes as naturally, and inevitably, as light into a house when the windows are opened. It was a great privilege for Enoch, Moses and Elijah to walk with God, and to hear him speaking in a way which they recognized: but we are in the same humanity as Enoch, Moses and Elijah. If their hearts had been less pure, and their ears more dull, they would have heard no accents of the Divine voice; and if our hearts are equally pure and equally open, the same Being who spoke to them will thrill us with the message which it is needful for us to hear. Some imagine that the days of miracles are past, and that the day of inspiration is ended, but that is to say that God is dead, or that humanity has reached His altitude. Rather let us believe in continuous miracle and continuous inspiration; that men are as truly inspired to-day as ever they were; that as hearts become purer their inspirations will be more frequent and constant. "The pure in heart shall see God" is not limited to one time. There is no need of another Bible, and none are now inspired to write Bibles; but there is need of clearer light, and wider knowledge in many spheres, and when our Master went away he promised the Spirit of

Truth, who would guide into all truth and show things to come.

All the past has been in the hands of the living God, and the living God must be the loving God, for there can be no God without love. He did not cease to love and sacrifice when the cross was raised on Calvary. All things in the present are in the same hands, and therefore where there are pure spirits the Divine Spirit reveals himself to them as to prophets and apostles. Some think they cannot believe in providence and inspiration. Let us rather say we cannot disbelieve in them. They are necessary to the idea of God.

A little child was lost the other day in the streets of New York, and after wandering long was picked up and cared for by some kindly people. Unable to tell where he lived, or by what way he had traveled, I do not know whether even yet he has found his home. But if that little child could have wandered away and have been, for one moment, out of the sight and care of God, I do not see how there could be a God. Along the track of the old emigrant roads, across the great Western plains, here and there are piles of stone, and above them a simple cross of wood, weather-beaten and decaying. When travel was by wagon, emigrants moved along those roads, and now and then a man, or woman, or child died, was buried by the way, and the procession moved on. Who lies beneath those rude cairns no one can tell, but if one of those persons is

unknown to God I do not see how there can be a God. It is not difficult to believe in providence: rather, it is impossible not to believe in it and retain our faith in God.

The future is in the hands of the living God; he is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. He was manifest at the Advent; he was manifest when the Master spoke to the woman of Samaria and told her all her secret life: he was manifest when Jesus took little children in his arms and blessed them; he was manifest when Jesus wept at the graveside in Bethany; he was manifest when Jesus hung upon the cross and prayed for those who crucified him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Yesterday, to-day and forever"! All the past on the heart and in the hands of him who offered that prayer. All the present on the same heart and in the same hands. All the coming days on the same heart and in the same hands. We know not what may be the surprises of the future. Judged by the past, great and marvelous will be the ways of the King of Saints. New discoveries, of which now we cannot dream, will break upon the world. The veil between the physical and the spiritual will grow thinner, until perhaps through it men will almost be able to see. The unexplored spaces will speak their secrets into the ears of those who listen. Conditions which now are vicious, and circumstances which work ruin, will be transformed, and a new

and more healthful stock breed a race with purer affections and loftier aspirations. The future is with God, and the Judge of all the earth will do right. Whatever is symbolized by the majestic descriptions of the Judgment will come to its realization; but the judgment-seat itself will be occupied by Him who hung upon the cross, and no harm and no injustice, and nothing at enmity with love will come to one human being.

This is the faith of the Christian. The heart of our creed is not what we believe about the Hebrews or the heathen, but what we believe about God; and we believe that he was revealed in Jesus Christ to take away the sin of the world; that in all the past his plans of blessing have been maturing; that in the present those same plans are moving toward their consummation, and that sometime he will see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Things are moving upward; the process never ceases, and God is never absent. He is in the struggle, submitting to limitation, manifesting himself both in defeat and in victory, and by defeat and victory, sorrow and joy, hastening the day in which there will be no more darkness and no more pain. Nothing is by chance; nothing is left to fate; all things are in the hands of love. Your child, your husband, your wife, your friend, is in the grasp of a terrible disease and your heart breaks; but God is not dead, and he loves with a love transcending yours, as the heavens are above the earth. Your

child is getting into evil ways, and your heart agonizes for him ; but God is not blind, and his love transcends your love, and his patience your patience, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Here comes a question which possibly some will be foolish enough to ask: "If all is moving toward good, and all will work for good, what difference does it make what we do? Are we not doing his will whether we are righteous, or whether we are wicked? If we do wrong is it our fault?" Now and then such questions are raised : what shall be answered? His purposes for good will go on with us if we will, but without us if we resist. The mystery of freedom is great and awful. It cannot be explained, but this we know : the providence of God always works toward harmony with wisdom, truth and love. If any one follows evil he puts himself out of harmony with the nature of things and the will of God. Whether he can stay outside that will forever, or whether by discipline and punishment he will be compelled to come to himself, we need not inquire. The outlook in either case is terrible enough. It is never God's purpose that any man should sin ; it is his will that all should be saved. But, whether men will go with it or not, his purpose of blessing will move on. A steamer will leave the port of New York to-morrow. You can go with it, or you can remain, but the steamer will not be anchored to your

whims. And the plan of God, by which he is causing all things to work together for good, will be accomplished, and all may go with it, have part in it, and help to make its movement the swifter; they may have fellowship with the great and good of the ages; they may march in the same ranks with prophets and apostles, with seers and sages, with missionaries and martyrs—with those who have died rather than deny the truth; they may hasten the victory, and when it is complete, rejoice in the consciousness that they have helped a little toward hastening the glad new day. But a baby's hand might as well attempt to prevent the sun from rising as for any to imagine that they can do aught to prevent the realization of His purposes whose love is everlasting and whose power is resistless.

This, then, is the conclusion we have reached. We cannot grasp it, we cannot comprehend it, we cannot see it with the mortal eye, but we, and all who live, are in the hands of measureless, fathomless, omnipotent and unending Love. All the past is his, and all the future is his, also. We live and move and have our being in the Living God; and he says: "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."

II.

THE HOLY TRINITY.

“There is only one God. The testimony of Scripture here absolutely accords with the witness of our conscience, and with the obvious unity of the universe in all its provinces and successions.”—A. A. HODGE.

“God exceeds our measure, and must, until either He becomes less than infinite or we more than finite. If we can apprehend Him so as to be clear of distraction, and of terms that are absolutely cross to faith itself, it is all that can be hoped.”—HORACE BUSHNELL.

“For the loving worm within its clod
Were diviner than a loveless God
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.”

ROBERT BROWNING.

“So to our mortal eyes subdued,
Flesh veiled but not concealed,
We know in Thee the Fatherhood
And heart of God revealed.”

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—MATTHEW xxviii. 19.

II.

THE HOLY TRINITY.

THE doctrine which fifty years ago was most in the thought of American Christians, and which once divided the Church, is now seldom mentioned. It could hardly be otherwise. The subjects which interest to-day are practical rather than speculative; thought reaches down to fundamental questions, and is occupied with inquiries concerning the existence of God and the spiritual and immortal nature of man. Yet it is not to be supposed, because men talk less about the Trinity, that it has been relegated to the museum of theological antiquities. Its essential elements were never so firmly held or so widely accepted; but this and all other religious truths are approached in a better spirit than formerly. Those who without a respectable knowledge of their own language, and much less of the languages in which the Bible was written, presume to talk authoritatively about things in infinity and eternity, have fortunately almost disap-

peared. Doctrines which never can be fully comprehended are not proper subjects for dogmatic statement, and least of all for controversy. Moreover, clear ideas about such subjects are now seldom required for church membership. Men are beginning to realize that as a violet may grow and absorb colors from the light without understanding its chemistry, so a spirit may grow in likeness to God without comprehending his nature.

The doctrine of the Trinity, then, is relatively out of sight, for two reasons: first, the progress of science has forced an entirely different class of subjects into prominence ; and second, Christian men appreciate that, however profound and practical the subject may be for meditation, it can never, without irreverence, be made a subject of debate. The clouds of the old battle have blown away, and now it is seen that the combatants were fighting to the death for what in the nature of things could never be settled. Each contended for a half-truth. The Unitarians were strenuous for the unity of God, and the Trinitarians for his trinity. Each side was true in what it affirmed, and largely in error in what it denied.

Laying aside further reference to the past, let us examine the doctrine of the Trinity from a Biblical and experimental standpoint. I have no interest in the subject as mere speculation. As a theological conundrum it is entitled to no more consideration than a child's riddle. If it

has no mission in the world except to be written in creeds for the purpose of keeping Unitarians out of so-called "Orthodox" churches the quicker it disappears the better for spiritual religion. Precisely because this doctrine as taught by our Lord seems to me a condensation of the Gospel, and an answer to the intuitions of the reason and moral sense, I venture to speak to you about it to-day.

Is the doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible? The first feeling on turning to the Bible for the purpose of finding this doctrine is one of amazement. It is nowhere directly stated. Let no one be surprised, for the Scriptures do not teach the existence of God. They declare "The fool hath said there is no God," but they do not teach His existence; they presume it from beginning to end, and without it would be meaningless. In the same way they presume the Trinity, and without it would be meaningless. Our Lord when his work on the earth was finished, when he must have been overwhelmed with the consciousness that he would speak in the flesh no more; when he knew that his words would have the authority of a final utterance; when he was giving his last directions concerning the advancement of his Kingdom, made the most exact and emphatic statement of the doctrine that it has ever had. His disciples were soon to start with their message around the world, and he was about to leave them forever, when he said:

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This practically says: “Go, make converts, and seal them to the new life equally in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Now whether any human expression of that doctrine is true or not, evidently by his use of these names our Lord understood them in some real sense to refer to the One God.

Exactly analogous is the benediction in 2 Cor. xiii:14—“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” Here St. Paul associates the three names in the same formula, and apparently teaches that what is back of one name is as real, as distinct, as enduring and as much to be reverenced, as what is symbolized by either of the others.

Some imagine that they detect a hint of this truth, although only a hint, in the fact that in the Old Testament one name of the Deity is a plural form. “And God (Elohim) said, Let *us* make man in *our* image.” But this is a fanciful interpretation. What was formerly considered conclusive evidence concerning this subject was 1 John v: 7—“There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” But that is spurious. It was probably interpolated into the sacred text by some scribe more anxious to sup-

port a theory than to transmit truth. The words are omitted in the Revised New Testament.

As these three names are joined in the final commission of Christ to his disciples, so all through the New Testament with each name is associated the same powers and attributes. In the first chapter of John's Gospel we read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The "Logos"—the Word—an expression used by the Greek philosophers to represent the utterance or manifestation of the Divine Reason,—is used by the Apostle John to represent God as manifested in a distinct personality, intelligible to man." The Word of God, in John's Gospel means the Son of God. God is thus said to have created the world by the Son. The Son is declared to reveal the Father. The Son himself said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The judgment is to be in the Son's hands. In the same way, the same epithets and attributes are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The most superficial reader of the New Testament must have noticed that at times Christ is spoken of as if he had the power and authority of God; and that similar language is applied to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the three names are used interchangeably. These names are associated in the most sacred relations. In the last utterance of our Lord, already given, they are classed together in such a way as implies

equality:—Go preach and baptize in the three-fold name. If that were the only reference in the Scripture to this subject I should hail it with the utmost delight, for to me instead of being a simple mystery, of no use except to cause good people to stumble, it is a light which makes clear and reasonable the otherwise incomprehensible mystery of God. The problem, then, is simply this: Are these three names for One Being, or do they denote three distinct persons?

Having thus before us in outline the Scripture teaching on this subject, observe a few fundamental facts, as applicable to it.

There is only one God. The Trinitarian believes in one God, and only one, as truly as the Unitarian. It is not a question between one and three: but between one who is a simple person, and one who is more complex, as a man is more complex than a plant. The Unitarian says, God is a person like ourselves, only infinite of course: the Trinitarian says, He is one as we are only not a simple but a complex personality. Life ever moves toward complexity, and the highest is most complex. Keep this clear,—Unitarian and Trinitarian *alike* and *equally* believe in one God, and *only* one.

These names in the New Testament are all applied to God, therefore they either represent three distinct beings, or they are three distinct names for one Being. But names of inferior beings would not be applied to the Supreme:

the presumption is, therefore, that the names are different appellations for one Deity. Jesus himself, quoting "the first and great commandment," declared, "The Lord our God is one."

The chief difficulty on this subject has arisen from the unfortunate phrase, which is not Biblical, "Three persons in one God." But the word "person" is an expedient of philosophy. Philosophy tried to explain the inexplicable, and took that word "person" for a crutch, and then limped all the way through its explanation. This word is misleading, whether used by a Unitarian or Trinitarian. The Trinitarian says, "three persons in one person;" and the Unitarian replies, "That is absurd! how can one be three at the same time it is only one? You believe that God the Father is one person, and the Son is another person, and the Holy Spirit is another person: that each has a separate work, and yet that there is but one Person,—the idea is inconceivable!" Yes, and that word "person" has not the slightest Scriptural foundation; but it is used by theologians with careful qualifications. My studies in theology were under the most eminent theologian who has ever lived in America, and he was always careful to say that by "person" we really mean *distinction*—three distinctions in one person, rather than three persons in one person. Professor Park's words* are, "There is a

* From reports of his Lectures as delivered to his students, 1869.

threefold *distinction* in the Godhead . . . and these three are one God." Again he says: "The word 'person' when applied to the *distinctions* of the Trinity has always been understood as used in a peculiar sensc." These distinctions are not merely official, but eternal.

Moreover, the word "person" as used by the Unitarian in regard to God involves as great a mystery and as great contradiction as the word "Trinity" when used by ourselves. All say that God is a person; yet God can be only figuratively said to be a person.

"A person or agent, as we conceive the term, . . . wills, putting forth successively new determinations of will, without which new determinations personality is null, and no agency at all. But God never does that. He does not decide to do one thing to-day, and change His mind and do another thing to-morrow. He has the same purpose from eternity. So a person thinks, and has a succession of thoughts, but that cannot be said of God, for He who knows all things cannot think in the same forms that we do. We remember; to Him all things are present—nothing has to be recalled. A person has momentary feelings; God is the 'same yesterday, to-day and forever.' Literally, God is not a person, for the very word is finite in all its measures and implications, because it is derived from ourselves. Figuratively He is a person, and beyond this, nothing can be said which is more

definite, save that He is in some sense unconceived, a real agent who holds Himself related personally to us, meeting us on terms of mutuality, such that we can have the sense of society with Him, and the confidence of His society with us, *as if* He were in truth a literal person like ourselves.” *

It is said, “I believe in God who is simply one person;” but that statement means “I believe in God who is infinite and finite at the same time, who is so great that he cannot be known and yet who is intimately known;” and that is a contradiction as hard to get over as to say, “I believe in God who is one and yet three.” Our Unitarian friends are in the same predicament as ourselves. The difficulty for both of us comes from trying to make simple that which in the nature of things is complex and inexplicable. Now and then some one asks for more definiteness in theological thought, and declares that the religious outlook is discouraging because men insist on saying “We don’t know” before eternal mysteries. The time never was in which men had any right to be more positive than now: and they never were more positive about the things concerning which knowledge is possible.

Certain doctrines are indefinite as to details, while as facts they gain emphasis from their indefiniteness. They are too great for expres-

*Bushnell: *Building Eras*, p 114-115.

sion. Finite words cannot utter infinite realities. In the Scriptures God is not defined; the doctrine of the Atonement is not laid out as a township on a map; the doctrine of Retribution is left in a cloud—but a cloud full of thunderings, and lightnings, and warnings; and the doctrine of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is never carefully defined, and yet it is clothed with an impressiveness and majesty that exact definition never possesses.

Having thus stated the Biblical foundation for what men have called the Doctrine of the Trinity, and having shown that it does not mean three distinct persons, but three distinctions in one person; that the idea of personality when applied to Deity involves as great difficulties as the idea of trinity; and that any revelation of what is infinite must, because of poverty of language, be cloudy and indefinite, we now turn to the testimony to this doctrine from reason and experience. Some subjects are understood, if at all, only by experience. I have learned by my own experience what neither the Bible, other books, nor any theological teacher ever taught me: that in order to belief in the unity of God the doctrine of the Trinity as stated by our Lord is essential. Many who think they reject the Trinity actually recognize it: many are spiritually Trinitarians and intellectually Unitarians. Charles Kingsley was one of the most honest men who ever lived. In a letter to a friend,

Thomas Cooper, he said :* “ But my *heart* demands the Trinity as much as my *reason*. I want to be sure that God cares for me. . . . I want to love and honor the absolute, abysmal God Himself, and none other will satisfy me. . . . and I say boldly, if the doctrine be not in the Bible it ought to be, for the whole spiritual nature of man cries out for it.” I echo his words —“ If it be not in the Bible it ought to be.” The process by which I have reached this conclusion is as follows :

Man is surrounded by Nature, with her seas and storms, her firmament thick-set with stars, her earthquakes and eclipses ; day is followed by night, and darkness is ever the hiding-place of power. Man is a cause : he can exert energy ; and when he sees storms careering through the heavens and lashing the oceans into mountains, he believes the hidden energy to be in the hands of an unseen Person. That Person man will strive to know and to propitiate. As the field of his observation widens there will be larger and more awful conception of the majesty of the unseen Being. Science whispers her secrets—says that the stars are worlds, and that there are galaxies of systems sailing in space ; shows that light traverses distances impossible of measurement ; hints at the forces which bind the worlds together,—and thus this thought of the

* *Biography of Kingsley* p. 198.

unseen Person grows until it overwhelms and prostrates. With our knowledge of the universe,—with thought running back to the time when the constellations were luminous and burning mist diffused through space ; with immensity multiplied by eternity—the idea of God is simply incomprehensible. Expedients of expression are resorted to by baffled intellects. Some say, Everything is God—that is Pantheism ; or, There is nothing but eternally changing matter—that is Materialism : but still hearts love and aspire, and still something within keeps frantically and confidently reaching for some One outside to answer inappeasable longings. With each year of progress the difficulty increases. Science is exploring the universe. The telescope opens vistas of distance before which we are breathless ; apparently dead metals are made to palpitate with music ; the spectroscope has analyzed the light of stars and told what substances are burning in their far-away fires ; it even is said that there are stars so remote that their light traveling since the Creation has not reached here yet, and will not arrive until we have joined the countless dead. God, the Creator, the King, the Father, he who holds all things in his hands—who by searching can find him out ? Can you imagine a Being, who never began, and who will never cease to be ? What do you mean by infinity ? “ Infinity ” and “ eternity ” are words used to veil ignorance. No man ever fully compreh-

hended them, I speak the word “God.” That represents to me the First Cause of the universe; but I do not even know what a “cause” is, and I do not know what the “universe” is. We cannot wonder that angels veil their faces, crying before him, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty.” The awful, unknown and illimitable must always be the *first* idea of God. Thus far there is no difference of opinion. Infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite holiness—that is God: and now having reached this conclusion, do we know any more about him than before? Thus far our Unitarian friends go with us: and here we part company.

But if we have only this knowledge we might as well know nothing of God. He is beyond us. Prayer is impossible, and religion a dream. We need to know not only that God is, but that he can be approached. If that knowledge is ever possessed it will be by his adapting himself to us. The search for God is as old as human thought. Much of what is miscalled “infidelity” is only an eager cry for surer knowledge. What is God like? Has he any thought or care for men? Sorrow crushes; no man can help; slowly and remorselessly fate closes around us, and the end is not far off:—are we only grist in an infinite mill whose stones grind on forever? Something within tells us that the Power outside cares for us, and that we can cry to Him and He will hear us,—that is, we personify that Power. This is not

my experience alone: it has been universal in all ages. Men have not only believed in God, but they have believed in a God who has revealed himself. Something of this idea is in almost all religions,—indeed, must be, for if we have simply an unrevealed and infinite God religion is impossible: there may be prostration, but there can be no communion. I believe in God; but if I must stop there then I might as well believe in nothing: it were better to be blind than to see only a force and no love. Hearts cry not only for God, but for One who adapts himself to human weakness. If God speaks to a man it must be in language which he can understand: if he shows himself it must be in a form to be recognized: if he speaks to me it must be in the English language. There is in all men a demand which can be satisfied only by a God revealed.

What is the doctrine of the New Testament on this point? God answers this longing of the soul of man in the only way it can be answered, by *revelation in humanity*. The Logos-doctrine is that it is eternally the nature of God to manifest himself. Whenever in the New Testament you have a reference to God considered alone, the name used is Father. Whenever that Father is represented as coming into relations with men the name is Son, or Logos (Word), that is, the Father communicating or revealing himself—as the uttered word reveals the thought. And so we believe that there is forever in God that which

is manifest in what Jesus Christ was and did. I want to know about God: his power I see in Nature; his feelings toward men, in Jesus Christ. Does God care for the poor? Nature seems sometimes to say, "Only to crush them;" Jesus preached the glad tidings to them and fed them. Does God care for the sick? Jesus went about healing diseases. Does God have sympathy for those who have broken his laws? Jesus prayed for those who crucified him. Does God care for the sorrowful? At the grave of Lazarus Jesus wept. Does God regard the masses who struggle in sorrow and pain? Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Does God really love men? The life of Christ, the teachings of Christ, the death of Christ, all answer,—"He seeks to save that which was lost." Take this one phrase, "God manifest in the flesh," and you have the clearest teaching concerning the earthly life of our Master.

But that revelation was necessarily limited; limited to a human form, by human language, to a short period of time. What relation to God had the millions who lived before Jesus Christ? What relation have we to him? These are questions of fundamental importance. What says Christ? "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The Father does not change: God is, always has been, always will be, in all his relations to men, just what Christ was, who died to

save men ; and so the cross declares that it has always been God's nature to seek and save the lost, and that it always will be.

If we continue to use the unfortunate word "person," we may say that we have now before our thought the first and second persons of the Trinity.

There is yet one more question. We need to know not only that God is, and that it is his eternal nature to reveal himself, but whether there is in this Nineteenth Century of the Christian era, any possibility of getting near to him : in other words, Has he anything to do with us *now*, or, when Christ died and the Bible was written, did God retire into infinite and thence-forward unbroken solitude ? It is well to know that Christ died eighteen hundred years ago to save sinners, but men need a Saviour now as much as they needed him then. It is well to point to the Bible as an infallible guide, but new questions are arising each day which every child knows the New Testament does not pretend to answer. The Bible says, "Love thy neighbor," but does not tell what love will lead a man to do. We need not only to know that God exists, and that he revealed himself eighteen hundred years ago, but whether he cares for us now, and whether there is any new light to break on the darkness of earth. A German theologian has said : "All men have desired a human God, that is, a manifest God ;" and I add, All men desire a present God.

What says the Bible to this ? "In the begin-

ning the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters ;”—that is, when chaos reigned, and man was not, God was then moving on nature. “And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come ;”—that is, when the New Jerusalem shall descend out of heaven from God the last sound that will echo over the old creation will be God crying to men, “Come.” God, a Spirit, in personal contact and communication with human spirits, interpreting old truth, revealing new truth, in the intimate daily leadership of spirits—that is the teaching of the Bible : for that, weary, struggling, defeated, but never entirely cast down, all men continually do cry. And so we have the doctrine of the Spirit—God always in vital touch with the spirit of man, convicting of sin, inspiring aspiration, revealing new truth.

God pervading the universe, and so transcending thought ; God not forever unknowable, but in all things which concern men just what Jesus Christ was ; God near to each one of us, even in our hearts, and so immanent in every soul. The three-fold name corresponds to a three-fold demand in the human nature. We have thus before us the doctrine as taught by our Lord :

- (1) The great, abysmal, infinite One—whom he named Father.
- (2) The same One in self-revelation, from eternity to eternity manifested through a distinct human personality—called the Son.

(3) The same One always moving on human spirits and drawing them toward himself—called *the Spirit*.

* And, now, I am ready to tell why I believe in the doctrine of the Trinity; why I can say with the poet preacher of England: “If it is not in the Bible it ought to be.” It is because the universe is to me without any meaning if this doctrine be not true. Jesus Christ revealed facts; and only facts are essential to faith. Each of us is not only justified but required as best he can to harmonize facts. Others have no more right to tell us how we must interpret facts than we have to tell them. The simplest statement of any doctrine is usually the best. The words of Christ in his last commission are clear; he told his disciples to baptize in the three-fold name, because that condensed the Gospel. I believe in that doctrine, because the Bible teaches it, and because the human soul demands it.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty.

I believe that it is an eternal distinction of the nature of God to manifest himself, and that in Jesus the Christ he has so manifested himself to man.

I believe that God did not wait until Christ came, to have intercourse with men, but that he had been moving on human hearts in all ages and lands, in China and India and on the Islands, as well as in Judæa, and that since Christ has

gone He has been continuing and will continue forever this work of salvation.

Thus the world's longing for God, for a human God, for a present and never-leaving God, is met and answered in the three-fold name. Is this simply a confusion of words? Is this simply a theological conundrum? None who have seriously considered the problems of human thought and life can think that it is. This doctrine of God is the only answer that I know to our profound and otherwise unsatisfied longings. I am afraid that many wander in darkness because, while they vaguely believe in God, they have not yet seen him as revealed, and as ever-present. "It is one of the merits of this doctrine," says Bushnell, "that it does not fool us in the confidence that we can perfectly know and comprehend God by our first thought." To me—as our Lord stated it, not as men have philosophized about it when trying to stretch it on the iron frame of their theological systems—the doctrine condenses the whole Gospel; it is the door through which the new day streams upon the darkness of humanity; it is the truth to live by, the truth to die by, the truth that makes immortality a necessity.

And now what can we do, who rejoice in this superlative reality, except key our hearts and our lives to the sublimest of doxologies, which has been chanted with fervor and harmony continuously growing through all the Christian centuries, and which will be chanted until the earthly

music shall break into the "Holy, Holy, Holy," of the Heavenly temple—"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. *Amen.*"

III.

WHAT IS LEFT OF THE BIBLE?

“I find more and more that the Bible is made very little use of for its true purpose, but all the more for purposes which are quite foreign to it.”—ROTHE.

“God be praised that this our book has not the clearness of a symbol or creed: that we are not forced to comprehend it aright, and that we may give many meanings to his word It is not in a chain of dry sentences that God reveals to us his will and the principles of his government: it is essentially by facts.”—ALEXANDER VINET.

“Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old:
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano’s tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,—
The canticles of love and woe.”

EMERSON, *The Problem.*

“Before all things the Bible is the book which has reached the highest conception of God yet attained by the human consciousness.”—HENRY WARD BEECHER.

“The redemptive purpose of God was not ushered into the world a full-grown fact; it evolved itself by a regular process of growth, and the process was marked by three salient features: slow movement, partial action, and advance to the perfect from the more or less imperfect, not only in knowledge but also in morality.”—PROFESSOR ALEXANDER B. BRUCE.

“Word of Mercy, giving
Succor to the living;
Word of life, supplying
Comfort to the dying.”

H. W. BAKER.

“The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.”—JOHN vi. 63.

III.

WHAT IS LEFT OF THE BIBLE?

THE air is full of discussions concerning the Bible. Those who would discredit it have at least one great problem before them, and that is, How a common book, written by ordinary men, can have commanded, for so long a time and under such varying circumstances, the attention and study of such different classes of people. Quite as many eminent and able scholars are devoted to its elucidation as to the sciences of geology or astronomy. Those who do not recognize in it any binding authority, still, by some subtle attraction, spend years over its pages. Some study it that they may overthrow it ; others that they may discover its place in the world's literature ; others that they may use it in support of systems of theology ; others for the splendor of its literary style ; and vastly more because of the light which it sheds on this life and the hints it gives concerning the life to come. Even great scientists, like Huxley and Tyndal, turn from their

laborious investigations and seek recreation in what may be called "theological and critical by-play."

And this is no new thing. The Bible for a thousand years has been more in the thought and attention of the civilized world than all other books combined. That it has drawn the attention of such acute and finished destructive criticism is a majestic tribute to its greatness. This study of The Book seems to have culminated in our time. Scholarship revolves around it: and the profoundest thinkers of the Old World and the New are attempting to solve the problems which it suggests. Many earnest and timid souls who do not yet realize that the foundation of our faith is not in the dead letter but in the Living Spirit, not in the miracles of two thousand years ago but in the continuous miracle of all the two thousand years, feel as if the whole structure of Christianity were falling.

We have heard much during the past year or two concerning critical questions—Who wrote the books of the Bible? and, When were they written? I desire to direct your attention to certain facts which cannot be changed by any theories concerning the authorship of the books, or the structure of either of the Testaments.

In the first place, observe that not one of the books whose authorship is called in question asserts that it was written by the person whose name it bears. Tradition says that the first five

books of the Old Testament were written by Moses. If new light shall prove that they were written by some one else, the world loses nothing. That they have been believed to be of Mosaic authorship no more affects their teachings than the quality of the metal in its case affects the accuracy of a watch. The time was when the Ptolemaic Astronomy was believed to be infallible; and when a more reasonable suggestion was ventured millions of pious souls were sorely troubled. But the change came, and instead of the evil effect which had been predicted the universe expanded, and the idea of God became more glorious and inspiring. I make no defence and no condemnation of Higher Criticism. A great change in the interpretation of important passages of the Bible may be forced. If it ought to be, the quicker it comes the better; if it ought not to be, clearer light will end in more firmly establishing the old positions. Never were so many consecrated Christian scholars studying Holy Scripture. If we cannot trust that they and those like them will by and by reach truth, we can believe nothing. Those not experts in the languages in which the Bible was written should remember that their opinions on these questions are not worth the words taken to utter them. It is ludicrous to suppose that good men are necessarily wise critics, or that questions which only careful scholarship can answer can be settled by a show of hands. Great scholars are

studying the Scriptural problems, and great scholars are on both sides. Whether Moses or some one else wrote the first five books of the Old Testament; whether there were one or two Isaiahs; whether Paul, or Apollos, or some unknown writer is the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is of little importance so long as the truth which the books contain, and which is certified by its correspondence with the needs of humanity, remains untouched.

“We believe that a church is a society of men possessing the life of the Eternal Son of God, and having direct access through him in the power of the Spirit to the Father; of men knowing for themselves, at first hand, the reality and glory of the Christian redemption; of men to whom the truth of the Christian Gospel is authenticated by a most certain experience, the experience not of the individual life merely, but of a society. Is this consistent with the agitation, the heat, the panic, created by the assaults of critics on the historic records of the Jewish and the Christian revelations? We of all men should keep calm. These controversies leave untouched the strong guarantees of our faith. For every church is a society of independent witnesses to the grace and power of Christ. For us the immediate manifestations of the eternal life that dwells in Christ are found not merely in the words and deeds and sufferings recorded in the Four Gospels, but in the company of the faith-

ful. We know that Christ is alive from the dead, for He lives in them.”*

Let us now attempt to answer the question, What would be left of the Bible even if all the claims of the critics were valid? Is there any vital truth in the Holy Scriptures which is independent of theories concerning the authorship of its books, or their arrangement in the canon?

The Bible is the Book of *God*. At its beginning we meet that word, and never does it disappear. The creation is ascribed to God—“The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;” when man appears he is in the image of God; when he has fallen it is not out of the care and watch of the Almighty, for from beginning to end echoes the Psalmist’s exclamation—“If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” The world is represented as resting in God’s providence. Enoch walked with God; Abraham was the friend of God. God planned for the education of the race in spiritual things. To realize that purpose one nation was chosen. That nation was selected not to be the only one saved out of the world, but for the purpose of

* R. W. Dale, *Address at The International Congregational Council, London, 1891.*

saving the world. The Jewish people were separated from others that they might be a light in the darkness. The light is no more favored than those who walk in its rays. That the millions in heathenism, as well as the few Hebrews, were not outside the providence of God is evident because he prepared a peculiar people to make visible his nature and presence in the world. The story from Genesis to Revelation thrills with one thought;—men and nations, in all conditions and times, rest on the heart and in the hands of infinite and never-failing Fatherhood. At the beginning God creates: at the end the Spirit invites. At the beginning are the clouds and storms of a weltering chaos, but above them God; at the end the glory and splendor of the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God; and in what may be called the center of the space between is uplifted the cross on which the blood was shed, revealing that even God enters into suffering and sacrifice in order that his purposes of blessing may be accomplished. To take God out of the Bible would be like taking the sun out of the firmament. Before the storms and earthquakes, before the brightness of the sun and the beauty of the stars, the heathen have bowed; but the Bible, retaining all the glory and majesty of the idea of God which comes from the creation, adds to it the assurance that from the beginning until now humanity has been held in the leashes of an

infinitely loving heart. With that thought our Bible begins, and with that it ends. No one can escape from the love of God. It is all-embracing, like the atmosphere; all-pervading, like the light, without beginning of years or end of days—for the cultivated and ignorant alike. More than that, even the creation itself “groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God.” The greatness of this truth passes comprehension. It is high; who can attain unto it? All men, all nations, and even the physical universe, are encompassed by infinite and never-ending Love,—that is the note to which is keyed all the music of our Bible.

The Bible is the Book of *Forgiveness*. Love would be mockery without forgiveness. He who carries in his heart a guilty secret imagines that the universe is armed for his destruction: even the physical forces seem to be his enemies; he hates the light. “Evil loves darkness.” There is a profound philosophy in that phrase. How it came to be true we need not inquire. Whether there is a personal spirit of evil, or whether sin is natural weakness, are questions of little importance. In all ages, and among all peoples, the consciousness of guilt has been terribly real. The system of sacrifices had its rise—no one knows when—in the consciousness of man that he had wronged the Supreme Power. Whether that power is God, or the Devil, the longing for forgiveness is manifested everywhere. You might

as well try to take out of the world the Alps or the Andes as this consciousness of guilt. This fact the Bible recognizes, and, almost alone among books, addresses itself to answer the inappeasable and universal hunger for pardon. The Hebrews at first were allowed to offer sacrifices, probably because they were essential to the popular idea of religion; but, gradually, as virtue was attached to them rather than to God, the warning voices of the prophets were raised, and we hear the cry: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly before thy God?" That is, the sacrifice which is pleasing to God is not fruit, wealth, the blood of animals—these are only symbols—but righteous acts and holy character.

The revelation of God as the forgiving Father culminates in our Lord Jesus Christ and in his supreme message: "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Men had asked, "What shall we do that we may appease the powers above?" To stifle remorse they had gone on pilgrimages, given their choicest treasures, even slain their children with their own hands, yet had found no peace. But from the time when the Hebrews were chosen until the cross was lifted one truth shines with ever clearer radiance:—God is not a Being who conditions forgiveness on suffering; the sacrifice that is acceptable to him is repentance, turning away

from evil, a new spirit and a clean heart. And so when men ask, What shall we do that we may escape from the consequences of sin? the Divine word is, You cannot escape. If you trust to yourself you must go on suffering forever, but if you turn away from your sin unto the Living God "He is faithful and just to forgive," and will in due time remove even the evil desire. You might as well try to get the color out of a sunbeam as the thought of forgiveness out of either the Old Testament or the New. Whatever may be the result of critical inquiry concerning the structure of the Book, the great voice with which the Bible closes sounds on forever:—"Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."

The Bible is the Book of *Righteousness*. Its offer of forgiveness never for a moment obscures its emphasis upon right living. All its teaching bends toward the perfection of character. The Hebrew bowed before Jehovah and cried, "Holy, Holy, Holy"; Isaiah in his vision saw the Lord, and heard the seraphim crying one to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory"; and the Master, when he was condensing the whole duty of man into one never-to-be-forgotten sentence, said, "Be ye holy, as the Lord your God is holy." Men are always like the Deity they worship. This idea of a holy God separated the Hebrews from all other nations. The Greeks, not-

withstanding the splendor of their literary culture and artistic development, believed in gods who were immoral, cruel, heartless, vindictive, desppicable. The depravity of heathenism has been to think of God, or the gods, as possessed of few of the virtues and all of the vices of humanity. High above such degrading conceptions of Deity was lifted the ideal of the Hebrews. It has no finer illustration than in the Book of Job, whose music is keyed to the righteousness of God. Job's friends declare that he has sinned, and, therefore, is being punished; but Job in conscious integrity refuses to believe in a Being who would punish one not guilty. He prays that he may die rather than give up his faith in a God of absolute justice. It has been said that the Book of Job shows us, not a man before the judgment-seat of God, but the Almighty before the judgment-seat of man. Job's cry has been echoed in Whittier's familiar lines:

“ The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above.”

That glorious drama of God and man is no exception in the Old Testament. Toward a life of righteousness all men are pointed. When they choose evil they are denounced. The mask is torn from the hypocrite Jacob, the beautiful garments from the lecherous David; even Solomon is shown to have lacked an appreciation of true wisdom; and when the Perfect One appeared it

was in the realization of perfect righteousness—"Who did no evil, in whose mouth was no guile; who went about doing good, and the law of whose life was love." In the Bible bad men are frequently described, but never with approval; infamous and cruel acts are recorded, but never commended; and, if they are endured for a time, it is only that the higher end of justice and truth may be realized. That cannot be wrong, that cannot be from beneath, that cannot be simply human, which begins and ends in the holiness of God and the righteousness of man.

The Bible is the Book of *Life*. This fact is the cause of much misconception. We are so accustomed to think of books as made that it is hard to understand that they can grow. But the Bible is a growth rather than a mechanism. It contains no propositions, and nothing like a theological system. There is not a hint that any one of its writers, not even the Apostle Paul, ever heard of such a thing as a logical process. A part of the Old Testament is a history of God's dealings with the race; other parts record the utterances of prophets who spoke the words of God to the men of their time; others still are hymns of praise and prayer—the rarest lyric music that ever broke upon human ears, voices of the day and voices of the night, cries of despairing spirits, longings for communion with the unseen, hisses of execration and wails of despair, songs of confidence and hope. The music of the

Old Testament was not made to order; it has come from the heart of man beneath the Spirit's touch like the water from the rock when struck by the wand of Moses; it has sprung like the gushing of fountains from perennial springs. Other parts are condensations of the wisdom of the time, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; at least one book is a great dramatic poem—at once a drama and an epic; for Job has been fittingly called "The Epic of the Inner Life." And then there are visions, wonderful openings from out of the darkness of the present into the splendor of the future.

All this is in the Old Testament. When we come to the New each part is instinct with life. "The life was the light of men." What human teachers would attempt to convey by prosy books the Divine Teacher has conveyed by a perfect Man. The New Testament is the record of a life, and meditations on that life. Take away the life, and nothing remains. The Gospels describe the life in the flesh; the Acts the beginning of that life after the body had been laid aside; the Epistles are meditations on the same life as it grows in the midst of an effete and pernicious civilization.

To attempt to read the Bible as you would read a treatise on Ethics or Logic is to misunderstand its meaning. The lesson of Enoch is that those living to-day may walk with God; and the lesson of the story of Joseph is of the providence of

God in human affairs. A literary critic might read the Psalms and find them only common poetry, but the man with a great joy or a crushing sorrow finds them voices from beyond the stars. One fact separates the Bible from all other books—it is occupied from beginning to end with life; it is written in terms of life; its messages are conveyed through human beings and never in logical propositions. It is, therefore, adapted to all classes; the wisest can never exhaust life, and the poorest are always teachable in its presence.

Not only is the Bible vital; it is also vitalizing. It inspires life. Those who turn to it to find specific rules for their duty will be disappointed, but those who come in contact with the spirit which dwells within it, as a spirit in a body, are unconsciously transformed. He who said that the Bible was to him not so much a book of rules as of germs, uttered a great truth; for its words fall into hearts and grow, and are valuable not so much for what they teach as for what they suggest. It exhausts no subject; its principles can be tested only by living them. No one knows what love is without loving, what goodness is without being good, what the peace of God is without resting in that peace. The messages of Scripture are conveyed through fallible men, in ordinary human language, and in that fact is their power. It would be a poorer book if it were more finished. If its writers had attempted to

make it perfect it would have been meaningless to the common people. It is like nature, which philosophers study forever without exhausting, and which peasants enjoy forever without being weary. It is a book of life, and it inspires life. Those who are true to it are always loyal to conscience, righteousness, love and hope; and everything which binds a man with golden chains to conscience, righteousness, love and hope, binds him to the throne of God.

The Bible is the Book of *Hope and Promise*. In the beginning a small ray of light appears, which expands as it extends, until the prophecy—"the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"—finds its fulfilment in Him who broke the barriers of class, sect, nationality, and gave new emphasis to the truth that all men are the children of God, and brothers one of another. Throughout the Old Testament this note of hope is never lost. Prophets at times seem to utter voices of despair, but even Jeremiah beholds the approaching dawn, while the prophecies of Isaiah ring like anthems. They begin with denunciations of wickedness, and end with visions of the time when nations shall learn war no more, when every man shall sit under his own vine and fig-tree, and there shall be none to molest and make afraid. The Master's message culminates in hope. The world lies in guilt and sin, but he will break the power of sin. Death casts its pall over a despairing race, but he declares that the

universe is the Father's House, and that dying is only going from one room to another in the infinite palace. His words are taken up by the Apostle, and we hear them echoing among the heights of his transcendent chapter—"Death is swallowed up in victory"; while the canon closes with the most splendid and inspiring glimpses of a time in which there will be no more sorrow and no more pain; where the Hand that lights the stars and leads the constellations, wipes away all tears; and where all beings live and see in love, as now we live and see in light. I say without fear of contradiction, there never was another book so full of hope as the Bible. Even Job catches glimpses of the Daysman—the Mediator—through whom he can approach the Almighty; and his question, "If a man die shall he live again?" is more than inquiry—it is the faint but eager assertion of a truth dimly but surely seen.

Read the Bible: become saturated with it: take its words concerning God, humanity, the forgiveness of sins, and what comes after death, and then be a pessimist if you can! The Scriptures represent all things as moving toward higher and finer conditions. The processes may be slow, but the triumph is sure. The Bible is the world's Book of Hope.

The Bible has *Jesus Christ* in it. We believe in the Bible because Jesus Christ is in its pages. Adopt any theory of the structure of the Old and

New Testaments that you please; imagine that Moses, or some one else, wrote the Pentateuch; that there was one Isaiah, or a dozen; that John wrote the Gospel which bears his name, or that it was written by an unknown Alexandrian; let all these theories have whatever weight may belong to them, let the analysis go on—what difference does it make with the contents of the Scripture? The Old Testament points toward the Coming One, and the New Testament is a record of the One who has come. Suppose the story of Jesus is a fiction—what then? Then a fiction is the mightiest power that ever broke upon the life of men. If Jesus Christ had his origin in the minds of some obscure Judæan fishermen, then those Judæan fishermen were the greatest men that ever lived, since they have created for the world its Saviour—nay, they have created its God. Whether Jesus is a fiction or a reality he is the world's Saviour, and is gradually bringing in a higher and better order. His power on life is independent of the question whether he is fact or fiction.

But the reality of his life no intelligent man questions. Doubtless there are many untrue traditions about him, and possibly some have found their way into the Gospels—what does it matter? One colossal character rises in the midst of the Bible and casts his light over all the centuries. There has been one Man concerning whom criticism is dumb; One has lived a faultless life;

One has proved that righteousness is possible ; One has taught that love is the highest law ; One has brought answers to the questions of humanity which perfectly satisfy all our most eager and persistent inquiries ; One has revealed God as Father ; One has said that the law of righteousness is the law of love ; One has declared in a voice which the world has heard and heeded that all sins are already pardoned, and that whosoever will may enter into the possession of forgiveness ; One with unsandaled feet has walked through the valley of the shadow of death and come up into immortal life radiant and triumphant. Doubt may stand before him and question. Timidity may say, "Oh, if it were only true !" Unbelief may say, "We will have none of him." But still he remains, filling both Testaments, gradually becoming "the master-light" of all our seeing and the master-thought of all our thinking, lifting human hearts out of gloom and despair, and opening before all the gates of hope, of peace, of "far-off infinite bliss." He is making all things new, bringing in a better social order, creating new States, giving new meaning to the long-forgotten doctrine of Brotherhood, and leading all men and nations to things above.

We are in the midst of times which try men's souls. Investigation is pushing itself into all realms ; science is knocking at all doors ; there is no more a Holy of Holies in all the temple of nature ; things which have been held sacred are

fading as the leaves ; old traditions are disappearing ; opinions and beliefs which have been supposed to be important, no longer have authority. No wonder that many are asking, Where will all this end? There are even those foolish enough to say, "Let us cling to what we have had: let us shut out the light because if we let in the day something we have held sacred will disappear."

I bring to you a different message. Remember that nothing true can ever be weakened by truth and light. Let in the light! let it penetrate every dark place! Truth has nothing to fear from investigation: only error is cowardly. Darkness never loves light. And while the process of criticism goes on, remember that whatever may be found true concerning the structure of the Bible, and the authorship of its books, it will remain forever—the Book that is filled with God, as the bush before Moses was filled with flame; the Book of Forgiveness, making plain the way out of sin into life and peace; the Book of Righteousness, showing that all things in the heavens are in the hands of perfect Goodness, and that all things on the earth move toward "a far off Divine event"; the Book of Life, written in terms of life so clearly that little children can understand it and sages never transcend it, whose words linger in the memory like seeds in the soil of springtime, and grow and bear fruit in lives of truthfulness and love; the Book of Hope, in whose pages humanity is represented as moving

ever toward a brighter and clearer day, in which the life of man is not described as ending in oblivion and nothingness, but growing in beauty and power, deathless as the Being from whom it came. And this Bible, which is the Book of God, the Book of Righteousness, the Book of Forgiveness, the Book of Life, the Book of Hope, is finally the Book which thrills and throbs with the radiant presence of Him who said: "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly"; who said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"; who said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you"; who said, "In my Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you."

That Book is the world's book: it belongs in the list of elemental facts, like the suns and the stars. We can trust it while we live, trust it when we die, and we shall find its messages all true when we have gone through death into the clearer light and the cloudless day.

IV.

THE IMMORTAL LIFE.

“ Whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being’s heart and home,
Is with infinity, and only there.”

WORDSWORTH.

“ The grave is but a little hill, yet from it how small do the great affairs of life look, how great the small ! ”—THOLUCK.

“ Life is short, death is certain, and the world to come is everlasting.”—JOHN HENRY NEWMAN.

“ The disposition to disparage the ‘ personal life,’ and let it go as an ‘ individual accident of the universal ’ probably arises from an unconscious confounding of it with the bodily form : on the break-up of which the spirit was supposed to have no retaining walls, but to escape as a vital breath and mingle with the general air.”—JAMES MARTINEAU.

“ How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what Divine affections bold,
Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour’s communion with the dead ! ”

TENNYSON.

“ If a man die shall he live again ? ”—JOB XIV. 14.

IV.

THE IMMORTAL LIFE.

IN one of the chapels of Westminster Abbey are buried the remains of a noble woman. Year after year loving hands have placed upon the cold marble on which her name is chiselled beautiful and fragrant flowers. I have never looked upon those flowers without feeling that they were both a tribute to the one who had gone and a silent, and almost resistless, argument in favor of continuance of life. While she was on the earth she often walked through the chapels of the dim old Abbey, for her home was almost beneath its roof; and yet the Abbey stands, and will for generations to come, but Lady Stanley, who won her way into human hearts by beneficent ministries, "and led all to things above," is supposed by many to lie beneath the stone that closes her tomb. Then a tree is more enduring than a heart: then those who make the life and beauty of a house are less than the house itself.

On a table in a parlor is a photograph, and

before it a vase of fresh flowers. On a wall is a large portrait, and its frame is twined with a living vine. The flowers and vine are more than tributes to the past, they are witnesses to a faith, however feeble, that those who have gone still live and do not refuse these tributes of affection. And what a strange thing is a vase of flowers before a photograph! The photograph may last for a century, or a thousand years, and not one lineament of the face disappear; and is man less enduring than his photograph? Does he die; and does his portrait which the sun prints on a piece of perishable paper have almost the quality of immortality?

Job had seen everything go. An evil disease had taken hold of him; his friends had denounced him as a sinner; he had nothing left but the consciousness of integrity; he had even prayed that he might die rather than be untrue to his faith in a just and righteous God;—when, suddenly, a thought flashed upon him: “If a man die shall he live again?” That is more than a question: it is a faint but real affirmation—a voice declaring that while there is no explanation of life as it is, if we may believe that it continues, all its mysteries may be explained. That old poem might have been written in this nineteenth century with scarcely any change. It is a profound and true study of human life, the problems of which in one time are the problems in all time. Other things have changed. More is known of the universe

than ever before. Progress has been multiform. The very stars have found voices; the light has become vocal; the secrets of the deep seas and adamantine rocks are being read; but in the nineteenth century after Christ there is no more known concerning life and its mysteries than was known in the nineteenth century before Christ. The question of Job is world-wide and world-old. I bring to you no new light, but rather gather up a few scattered rays and allow them to flash their gleams on this endless study.

Jesus came to a people ready to welcome death as the only way to escape from the miseries of existence. He never recognized death. Before he healed the daughter of Jairus he said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth;" and when he came to the grave of Lazarus he said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." His last words were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." His answer to Job's question is a strong and unhesitating affirmative. For a moment, however, let us turn from our Master and listen to other witnesses.

The immanence of God gives authority to the voices that speak in the human soul. If God pervades his universe and is in humanity, then the voices of the human soul, when they can be heard, have the authority of the word of God; and truth which can be found anywhere, even if not written in the Scriptures, is not to be ruled out as belonging to an inferior realm, but it, too, comes to us with Divine sanction. I do not feel that the

only light upon the mystery of death is found in the teachings of our Master. He treats the subject as he treats the idea of God. The existence of God is presumed, never proved, in the New Testament. In the same way from beginning to end Jesus presumes continuance of life. The importance of that phrase, "If it were *not* so I would have told you," cannot be exaggerated. It recognizes other witnesses whose testimony is entitled to reverent consideration. To their utterances we now turn.

The hypothesis of future life makes possible a solution of the mystery of this life. This thought is prominent in the Book of Job. It has forced itself into the thinking of all time. The wicked succeed and the good fail; the bad are exalted and the pure are cast down; the vicious have palaces and the virtuous live in hovels; Domitian wears the purple and Epictetus is lame and a slave; Nero sways the sceptre and Jesus hangs on the cross. Such sights are not universal, but they are so common as to confuse and confound our thinking. Why is sin allowed? Why are millions born into conditions which necessitate evil? One little outcast child—with neither father nor mother, no school but the street, no home but the brothel, no companionship but that of thieves—is an awful mystery. Job could see no meaning in life. He was ready to die, until there came to him the thought of a life beyond the grave. If there is life beyond, he seems to say,

then what now is wrong may be righted. What helped him, illuminates the same mystery for us. Evolution points to a perfected race in far-off ages, a race which may sometime be immortal, but has no answer when we ask, How about those living now, who will never know anything of that perfected race? Are they any more than the blossoms which never come to fruitage, and the weak who go down in the struggle of life? There is no possible solution of the mystery except on the supposition of continuance of being. Professor Fiske well says at this point "faith must appear and bridge the gulf."

If life endures, there is a motive for the development and exercise of the noblest of human faculties. Our best faculties become free and efficient only through discipline and struggle. The noblest who ever lived was "made perfect through suffering." But now the question rises—and it is intensely practical—if the best and noblest can be realized only through struggle, sacrifice, sorrow, and can be used but a little time, "Is the game worth the candle?" Would Raphael have painted the Sistine Madonna if he had known that as soon as its divine beauty was perfected a remorseless hand would tear it into a thousand shreds? Would Germany have finished that almost ideal temple which lifts its splendor on the banks of the Rhine had it been known that, within five years after the crosses were placed upon the spires of Cologne, the whole

mass would tumble into ruins? Why should any seek improvement, with its accompaniments of anguish and agony, if death is at the end of the way? Why should any try by long and painful culture to perfect characters which, almost as soon as the process is ended, by a ruthless fate will be utterly and irremediably annihilated? But if life continues then there will be a sphere for the use of those faculties. Man's passion for advancement, culture, perfection, is explicable only on the hypothesis of unending life. While I fully believe that there is more happiness in virtue than vice, in culture than in ignorance and neglect, I cannot fail to recognize also that, theorize as we may, to most the motive for improvement will go if all hope for the future is lost.

If death ends all there is no explanation of the fact that most die at the very time when they are best fitted to live. The list of great ones who have fallen in the midst of illustrious promise is long indeed. Shelley, whose music was like that of his own skylark, finished his singing at twenty-nine: Keats "felt the daisies growing over him" at twenty-two; Frederick Robertson was only thirty-eight when his voice was hushed: Professor Clifford had ceased his investigations at thirty-four: Sister Dora was only in middle-age when death claimed her. More than one building at Harvard, Yale, Amherst and Princeton, is a memorial building. Young men pursue their studies, give brilliant

promise, and just as great things are expected of them strength fails and tragedy ends the farce. A fireman climbs a lofty building to save a child. He is young, vigorous, brave, and full of hope. The child is saved, and the man lost when most proving his right to live.

What is true of youth is also true of age. Old age by no means implies decadence of power. The Apostle John did his best work after he was seventy. The controlling statesmen of Europe are nearly all sixty years of age, or over:—Caprivi is sixty-one, Crispi over seventy, Bismarck seventy-seven, Salisbury seventy, Gladstone over eighty, Castellar sixty, and Pope Leo not far from eighty-two. Of modern historians, Bancroft and Von Döllinger continued to write when they were far beyond eighty; Bryant wrote his “Flood of Years” when he was eighty-two; and Longfellow was only about ten years younger when his muse rose to its loftiest flight in the Alumni Poem at Bowdoin College entitled, *Morituri Salutamus*. England’s Laureate is singing as sweetly as ever, at eighty-two, and our own Whittier, about the same age, like the Apostle on Patmos is still “in the spirit,” and still sounding the praises of the “Eternal Goodness.” These men will not die because they have ceased to be of service to the world, but death will find them with their spirits’ eyes undimmed and the strength of their spirit unabated. If there is continuance of being, those who seem to die only

change their sphere of activity: but if there is no continuance of being, the brightest, finest, most splendidly equipped of our race drop into nothingness at the moment they are best fitted to be a blessing and a joy. To believe that, is to deny every voice that speaks in the human soul, to put shackles on reason, and to say that that which seems impossible is the only reality.

If there is no life beyond death, we must believe that humanity is created for no high purpose. There can be no noble purpose if the grave is the end. If men are only like the drops in the river rushing toward Niagara, disappearing forever when the abyss is reached, why do any live? Live to love and be disappointed, to aspire and fail of achievement, to have a few blessings and then to lose them; live long enough for dear ones to get entangled in our heart-strings and then have our heart-strings torn to shreds; live to build houses and plan for enjoyment and awake to find the dream broken? But with Job's hypothesis the end is not yet. That which seems without purpose or plan moves toward a time in which there is opportunity for great things. If we live but to die, there is no possibility of an adequate purpose in any human being; but if death is a sleep by which worn powers are refreshed that the new day may be the better enjoyed, all things fall into harmony.

Moreover, if life survives death the voices of

the human soul prophesy what will be realized. What poet ever yet sang all the songs which he heard? What painter ever painted all the pictures he has seen in the halls of his imagination? What musician ever thrilled the world with such harmonies as have swept into his consciousness when he has been alone with the seas and the stars? What philanthropist ever did all for the amelioration of man that he longed to do? What philosopher ever solved all his problems? What astronomer ever completed his explorations? Who ever truly loved without dreaming that love would spring a bridge over all abysses and follow its object through all spaces? Why are men afraid to die with guilty secrets unconfessed? Even the vilest and most hardened have dreaded the dreams that might come in the sleep of death. Aspiration, love, conscience, remorse, are as real as stones and stars, and if there is no possibility of their satisfaction each human being is a living lie. But suppose life does continue—what pictures Raphael may have made since he left the earth! What songs Milton, with his eyes open, may have sung! What music Mozart may have produced since the last wail of his Requiem sounded in his earthly ears! Then love may claim its own everywhere!

If there is no future life a singer is less than his song, an artist inferior to his picture, an architect not so enduring as the building which he designs; then Wagner's music draws thou-

sands across the sea to Baireuth while Wagner himself has long ceased to exist; then Peter's Dome will endure for countless generations but Michael Angelo is but formless dust: then his Dialogues will stimulate thought to the end of time, but Plato for thousands of years has been only a name; then the Teacher of Nazareth is as dead as the cross upon which he was crucified. If such things are true, nothing can be believed. But reason, conscience, aspiration, love, rise in indignant protest and declare that the thing made can not be greater than its maker.

If the hypothesis of life beyond death is unfounded, the wisest and best of all times have believed in what has no reality. It can be affirmed that no thinker of first rank whose writings are preserved ever argued against immortality. Dr. Munger has well said: "The master-minds have been strongest in their affirmations of it. We do not refer to those who receive it as a part of their religion. In weighing the value of the natural or instinctive belief, Augustine's faith does not count for so much as Cicero's, and Plato's outweighs Bacon's: Plutarch is a better witness than Chrysostom; Montesquieu than Wesley; Franklin than Edwards; Emerson than Channing; Greg's hope is more significant than Bushnell's faith. All the great minds, often in spite of apparently counter-philosophies, draw near to the doctrine, and are eager to bear testi-

mony to it. Even John Stuart Mill, whose religious nature was nearly extirpated by an atheistic education, does not say nay when the roll of the great intellects is called. Blanco White, another wanderer from the fold of faith, wrought into the form of a sonnet so perfect that we instinctively call it immortal, an argument, the force of which men will feel so long as 'Hesperus leads the starry host':—

‘If light can thus deceive,
Wherefore not life?’

Wordsworth touched the high-water mark of the literature of the century in his ode on Immortality, and Tennyson's greatest poem is throughout exultant in the hope that 'Life shall live forevermore.' ” *

If there is no life beyond the grave, all moral and religious thought, too, has been on a false basis. The Greeks believed in immortality, and reared exquisitely sculptured tombs to the memory of their loved ones. In it the Egyptians and Assyrians believed. It occupies a large place in all religions. It may be a question whether the Hindu Nirvana postulates continuance of consciousness, but, while so many scholars insist that it does, the Hindu faith cannot be considered an exception. All men and nations as far back as history goes have had some form of religion. Their religion has been their most

* *Freedom of Faith*, p. 241.

sacred possession. It has embodied all that was dear of hope, aspiration, faith; and in the heart of almost all forms of religion, from the baldest paganism to the most exalted Christianity, has been belief in life surviving death.

It may be said that no one of these arguments is strong enough in itself to be conclusive, but when all are woven into one we have a cumulative argument which has the strength of certainty, a chain which binds to the noblest life, the brightest hopes, and the grandest achievement. That the immortal life has not been demonstrated is most freely granted, and that at present demonstration seems to be forever impossible to those who are in the flesh; but we have made a credible basis for faith: we have reached a point in which the only thing for a reasonable being to do is to live as if the immortal life had been mathematically proven. To take any other course would be an act of intellectual folly which would imply that reason had ceased to have weight. I close this part of the discussion with an impressive quotation from a book which in recent days has helped many to find a rational basis for faith in the immortal life:

“From the first dawning of life we see all things working together toward one mighty goal, the evolution of the most exalted spiritual qualities which characterize humanity. Has all this work been done for nothing? Is it all ephemeral, all a bubble that bursts, a vision that fades? On

such a view, the riddle of the universe becomes a riddle without a meaning. The more thoroughly we comprehend that process of evolution by which things have come to be what they are, the more we are likely to feel that to deny the everlasting persistence of the spiritual element in man is to rob the whole process of its meaning. It goes far toward putting us to permanent intellectual confusion, and I do not see that any one has as yet alleged, or is ever likely to allege, a sufficient reason for our accepting so dire an alternative. For my own part, therefore, I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense in which I accept the demonstrable truths of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work."*

But what is thus prophesied is not mere existence: it is life. Existence alone is not desirable. What our Lord promised was not continuance of existence, but fullness of life. He said: "I am come that ye might have life, and more abundantly." Job would have derived no comfort from the idea of continued existence only, for that might have meant added misery. But because the future offered an opportunity of improvement, he hailed its suggestion with gladness. Existence tied to sorrow and living death is hateful; but that toward which the Apostle pointed was life which gives promise of infinite joy, for he

* John Fiske. *Destiny of Man*, pp. 113-116.

said: "This corruptible must put on incorruption: this mortal must put on immortality." Life signifies health, growth, beauty, power, fruitfulness. In the Scriptures it never has any other meaning. Spiritual life has one antithesis, and that is death. It was not worth while for our Master to come, if all that is before man is the possibility of continuing to exist and think. If life and existence are synonymous, the Buddhists reason wisely when they say that there is nothing so desirable as cessation of being, since existence is the cause of sorrow. The word resurrection carries with it a better significance—the rising of one who has been down; newness of strength and freshness of vigor. It is a hint of a glorious dawn following a dismal night. The Greeks spoke of the day rising from the bed of the night. The teachings of our Lord are in harmony with the prophecies of experience, and the voices that sybil-like speak their oracles in the soul: and all add emphasis to the words of the Apostle, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Life continues, with all its possibilities.

Life always moves toward blessing. If by any chance it is deflected, and becomes ugly and evil, it remains in that form but a little while, for its tendency is to revert to its original type. Therefore we argue that if life continues it carries with it by its very nature the possibility and necessity of working itself clear from restrictions, limitations, and corruptions. The experience of the

past, the philosophy of the ages, the profoundest poetry, the loftiest utterances of sage and seer, all accord with the simple and beautiful declaration of the Master, "If it were not so, I would have told you."

Life prophesies its own continuance; the history of thought utters the same prophecy; the religions of the world have added their witness—death is the freeing, not the ending, of life. But now the question rises, Have we any knowledge of what that life is? From that strange land for which all long have any returned, giving information of what it is like? Have human feet ever trod the slopes of those mountains, or human eyes gazed upon the spires of that city? The Bible is full of hints of the future, but contains little of revelation. We catch glimpses of glory, as light falls through rifts in the clouds on far-away heights, but that is all. Christ was more anxious that men should be in possession of the deathless life than able to satisfy curiosity concerning its nature. Nevertheless there are a few hints which may well be studied.

"In my Father's house are many mansions." As in a palace there are many rooms, so in the universe there are many spheres, and the children of God move at the Father's will from one to another. Dying, then, is not going into an abyss, but passing from one room to another in an infinite palace, and death is the door between the rooms.

The example of our Lord teaches us that resurrection is in a form, for the risen Jesus was known to Mary in the garden, to Thomas in the upper room, and to the disciples by the lake. He even used a human voice. He seemed to walk, as on the way to Emmaus. This teaches that heaven may not be beyond the stars, but in the very houses in which we live, and along the streets through which we move. Heaven may not be separated from us by distances, but by qualities: it may mean not so much a change of locality as of character. The appearance of the Master after death teaches that spirit is independent of physical barriers, for he appeared to Thomas in the upper room, and disappeared as if there were no physical obstructions in the walls.

After he had risen the Master continued his ministry. He talked with the disciples, gave them messages concerning his work, and to Peter he said: "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs." Jesus was the typical man. If he rose from the dead, we, too, shall rise: if he lives in a form, we, too, shall live in a form; if his spiritual body is independent of physical barriers, we, too, shall be independent of them; if after death he ministered to those who were left behind, then the spaces by which we are surrounded may be filled with ministering spirits. The heathen often caught dim glimpses of glorious truth. They spoke of "tutelary deities," whom they believed to be guardian spirits. The truth beneath their rude

conception was clearly taught by our Lord when in ministry he returned to the earth. We may not be the only beings who walk these streets and gather in these churches. The appearances of Jesus after his resurrection teach that those who on earth had within them the slightest germ of the Divine Life, according as that life has grown, have followed in the footsteps of Him who solved the doubts of Thomas, spoke a loving word to poor bewildered Mary, and, after his denial, put upon Peter the burden of a blessed service.

That life in the spiritual body is free from sorrow and pain is taught in the seventh chapter of the Revelation, in words whose music sometimes seems the sweetest that ever broke upon human ears: "There shall be no more pain, and no more sorrow, and no sin, and no more death, and God shall wipe away all tears, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof."

But may it not be that humanity moves from the sorrow of the present into the joy of a future which is limited, and that *at last* death will be the end? We cannot enter that realm, but our Master has declared that life is everlasting. Moreover, it is the nature of all good things to endure: only evil tends toward death. If, now, we can think of life independent, and free from baleful influences and agencies, it is easy to believe that the word of our Lord was true when he spoke of the everlasting life. But there are

questions enough in the present without troubling ourselves about the details of the future. In the meantime let us rejoice that the darkness of this night breaks into the splendor of a new day, and believe that no day will ever dawn which will close in endless night.

If you ask me once more, why I believe all this, I am not slow to reply: I believe it because it is reasonable, because any other hypothesis is unreasonable; because it is an insult to human powers to think that every voice which speaks within our souls utters a long and persistent lie. I believe it because it is right that we should take counsel of the best within us rather than of the worst. It is more reasonable to rest in our hopes than in our doubts, to have faith in things which point toward blessing than to believe that there is no purpose in creation, and that we, and the universe, are driven hither and yon as drift on the ocean, or leaves in a tornado. I believe in the immortal life because nothing else is reasonable. There are a thousand questions which cannot be answered. In vain we reach for parallels in the present, forgetting that the present can furnish no line by which to measure the future. I believe in the immortal life because nothing else satisfies. We are not like stars without orbits. We are not made to sing songs that will make music after we are nothing. We are not here to build houses which endure while we dissolve in dust. We are not here to love, aspire, grow

strong and noble, and then see that it would have been just as well to have reached after nothing, to have hated as to have loved, because all things move into one bottomless abyss. I believe in the immortal life because it is the noblest and most inspiring view of the life which now is. It makes the best and happiest men, and it will make the best and happiest world. That cannot be altogether unreal which moves toward the highest happiness and the supreme welfare. Only grant the future, and all the sorrows of time may be righted, all the inequalities and injustices of the present may prove to be ministers of blessing rather than of cursing. That which makes the best world is the best faith, call it what you will. I believe in the immortal life because the noblest Being who ever walked this earth, whose whole career was instinct with truth and love, who proved his right to speak for God by his likeness to God, has declared that we are in our Father's house, that what we call death is only sleep, and that those who rest in that sleep will in the morning awaken in a brighter room to sweeter service.

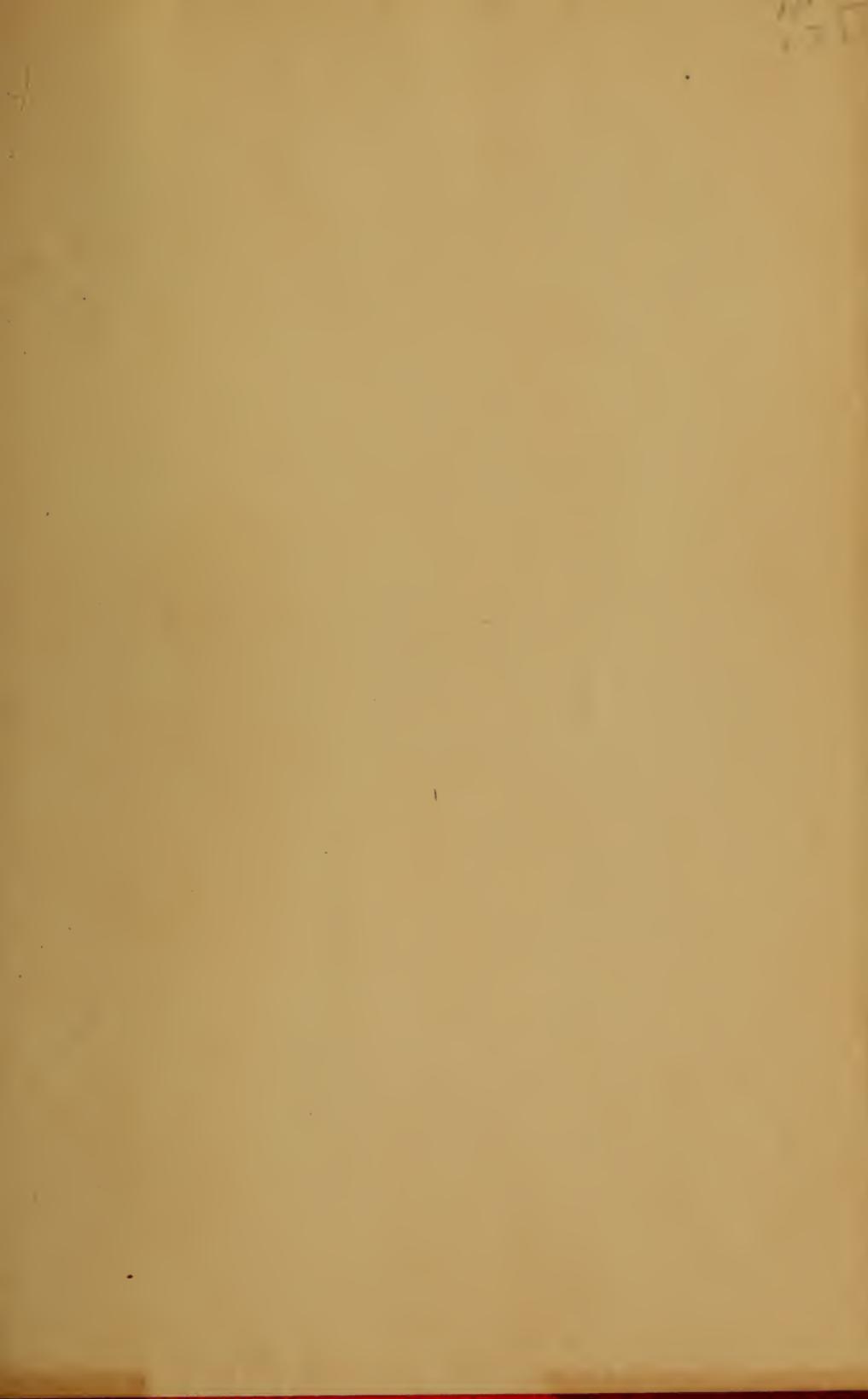
If, then, after all we are mistaken; if the great and the good in the past—the greatest and best, let us say—have believed a lie; if the voices which speak within our own souls utter a lie, and we are mistaken and death ends all—what then? Well, there is only one answer: even if it be error, it is a blissful one. Better to live sweet

and noble lives with so blessed an illusion than to grope aimlessly in the darkness, without light or hope. But we are not mistaken. The faint intimation which flashed upon the wondering vision of Job has grown into full-orbed light as it falls upon our faith and love. We have heard His voice speaking to us who said, "I am the resurrection and the life." We have seen men, buried in the grave of sin, rise in newness of life on the earth. We have seen those whom we loved go down into the dark valley with songs upon their lips. We are seeing in our time the curtain that separates the visible from the invisible grow thinner and thinner, until no one would be surprised if it should be rent in twain. We will not believe that life, history, human thought, all the world's religions, all the world's bibles, and our Master Jesus Christ, are all deceivers, and that a falsehood is at the base of all things. We will rather trust, hope, love, aspire, and work on toward that which is best, assured that by and by the day will dawn and the shadows flee away; that we shall see Him and be like him; that the light affliction which is but for a moment will work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We will keep near to Him through life, and through death, until with Him we realize the fullness of his words—*Resurrection, and Life!*

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